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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 536th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 19 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. MBOI

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Barbados (continued) (CRC/C/3/Add.45; HRI/CORE/1/Add.64/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/BAR/1)

1. The CHAIRPERSON asked the delegation of Barbados to respond to the question raised by Mrs. Mokhuane at the previous meeting concerning what was considered to be "corporal punishment permitted in a reasonable degree".

2. Miss MASON said that her delegation recognized that corporal punishment could be detrimental to a child's physical and psychological health and development. However, the current law in Barbados under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act still referred to "moderate chastisement" - a somewhat subjective concept - as a method of punishment and discipline. A number of cases had been brought before the courts and in most of them it had been decided that the punishment had been so excessive as to constitute physical abuse. However, in other cases it had been decided that if, for example, the child's skin had not been broken or he or she had been only moderately bruised, that constituted moderate chastisement. Those people in the community who did not believe in corporal punishment, including the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child, were working on the issue.

3. The CHAIRPERSON said that information was needed on not only the physical impact of corporal punishment, but its psychological and emotional impact. She invited the members of the Committee to ask follow-up questions on family environment and alternative care and on basic health and welfare.

4. Mr. FULCI, noting that Mrs. Ouedraogo had already requested information on adoption, asked Mr. Griffith to elaborate on that subject. According to the country report, domestic and intercountry adoption were governed by the Adoption Act of 1981 and the Adoption Regulations of 1986. However, no separate data were given for each type of adoption. Barbados was not a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993: was the Government planning to ratify it? Moreover, statistics for the Caribbean region suggested that boys were more frequently abandoned in infancy and childhood than girls: was there a reason for that?

5. Regarding abuse and neglect of children, NGO sources confirmed that violence against women and children was a continuing social problem, both in Barbados and worldwide. Women's rights groups had reported that the number of known incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence and rape was on the increase, despite the continued reluctance of many victims to report them. According to UNICEF, the number of abandoned children in residential care in the eastern Caribbean area had also risen. However, it was difficult to quantify the extent of child abuse because of a lack of accurate records. In the light of the information given in paragraphs 116 to 123 of the report, had any comprehensive research been conducted or planned on the mistreatment of children within and outside the family? Were any other measures being taken

or envisaged, such as information campaigns to help prevent mistreatment, including sexual abuse, and to promote the treatment and rehabilitation of victims?

6. Regarding basic health and welfare, he asked the delegation to provide updated information on the percentage of children who were breastfed, since UNICEF's State of the World's Children 1998 report had given no data on breastfeeding in Barbados.

7. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that Mr. Fulci's questions regarding the Hague Convention and raising public awareness of child abuse had already been answered at the previous day's meeting.

8. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that the country report indicated that young girls were subjected to violence, sexual abuse and rape in the family and even at school. What measures were being taken to give them better protection against abuse, including at school? The report also referred to difficulties encountered by the Child Care Board in dealing with cases of abuse and neglect, for example, the refusal of the child's family to cooperate with the Board. Other problems were the length of the judicial process and the lack of cooperation among the various services concerned. What measures were being taken by the Government to improve the quality of services and to induce families to cooperate?

9. Regarding health and welfare, most nurseries were privately run and were monitored by the Child Care Board. However, the monitoring was inadequate since it was done by one person alone. What sanctions were in place or envisaged for non-observance of the minimum rules and norms in day-care institutions? Had more staff been recruited or had other action been taken to improve the service?

10. The report said that there was no homelessness problem in Barbados: was that still the case? Were there any homeless children? Since poverty existed, cases of homelessness might also occur. Had a study of the issue been conducted?

11. Mrs. KARP, referring to Miss Mason's explanation of what constituted moderate chastisement and what constituted abuse, said that if courts found that, as long as the child's bones were not broken, moderate chastisement rather than abuse had taken place, that would impede efforts to create an atmosphere of non-violence. Had a study been conducted into the possible connection between the use of corporal punishment to discipline children and subsequent violent behaviour by those children? The transition from a culture that allowed corporal punishment to a culture that recognized that corporal punishment only led to increased violence was a difficult one. However, a number of countries had made such a transition and Barbados could learn from their experience in order to introduce alternative methods of discipline without parents and teachers feeling that they had lost control over children.

12. She requested more information about the misbehaviour of girls which was reported to probation officers. Such misbehaviour apparently included rudeness to parents and coming home late; however, if it was reported to a

probation officer, it was presumably regarded as an offence. That suggested that girls were not always recognized as having rights. Had that issue been discussed and, if so, what conclusions had been drawn?

13. Regarding child abuse within the home, the issue of battered women should be raised, since children who grew up in a home where violence was used against women tended to use violence against their own children. She was aware that Barbados had legislation providing for offenders to leave home, but had a comprehensive policy been developed on dealing with cases of domestic violence in police stations and courts? Were women encouraged to complain and were complaints followed up? Were offenders brought to trial?

14. Although the problem of HIV and AIDS was not yet a serious one in Barbados, had comprehensive policies been formulated in that regard, including how to involve children in an education campaign on the subject? How were children with AIDS treated in the education system? What measures were being taken to cope with a possible increase in the number of children orphaned as a result of their parents dying of AIDS? Many children under 16 needed to consult doctors or psychologists on adolescent health problems without their parents' consent: were free facilities available for that purpose? The existing reproductive health curriculum needed to be expanded to cover other problems such as drugs, violence and inter-relationships between children.

15. She reiterated the need to formalize policy relating to disabled children and to increase the number of professionals who specialized in dealing with them, since the shortage of such professionals resulted in many disabled children leaving school at 16 without the knowledge or skills necessary for life.

16. Mrs. MOKHUANE welcomed the action taken to address the health problems of children aged 0 to 5 and the problem of malnourishment, although obesity and hypertension were still increasing. Children tended to acquire the eating habits of their parents and that could lead to problems later in life. Did Barbados have a comprehensive policy on nutrition and how did it filter down to the population at large?

17. The successes of the Family Life Development programme had been mentioned but had it encountered any difficulties? Although HIV and AIDS did not currently pose a significant problem in Barbados, had policies been planned to deal with that issue in the future, for example, the question of children who might become orphans through the death of their parents from AIDS? Also, while the number of teenage pregnancies had declined, the number of abortions had increased, suggesting that abortion was being used as a method of contraception. How was that question being addressed? On the subject of reproductive health, progress had been made in teaching people about responsible sexual behaviour, but was the emotional aspect of sex also covered?

18. Access to early childhood care was not universal and appeared to depend on parents' ability to pay for it. What was the Government's policy in that area? The information regarding disabled people seemed to suggest that integration policies were not comprehensive enough and she requested more

information about how they worked and what code of standards was used. The statistics on suicide and parasuicide suggested that girls were affected more than boys. Had a study been conducted of the problems leading to suicide and how to alleviate them? They were being addressed to some extent in the Family Life Development programme; however, more substantial information was required.

19. Mr. RABAH asked if there was a system for coordination between the public and private sectors. Were any centres other than St. Andrew's Children's Centre and the Evalina Smith Children's Ward working with the Ministry of Health and what degree of success had they achieved in protecting children from disease? In 1993, Barbados had accepted UNICEF's challenge to make hospitals more baby-friendly; what progress had been made since then in meeting that challenge? Could more details and, if possible, figures be given on nutrition and child health? What projects were planned for the future with regard to child care and social security for children in Barbados?

20. Mr. DOEK, referring to paragraph 73 of the report, asked if there was any difference between the custody arrangements for children of married and unmarried couples. Had a family reunification policy been developed for children who had been placed outside the parental home for a certain period of time?

21. Mrs. EL GUINDI asked what the infant and maternal mortality rates were and what percentages of disabled children were male and female. What type of monitoring system was used to verify those percentages?

22. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that, although statistics on cases of substance abuse, suicide and parasuicide had been provided, no surveys seemed to have been conducted to provide a broad picture of how those problems affected the community. Were any such surveys under way or planned for the future?

23. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) said that, in 1998, the population of Barbados had been 266,900, the birth rate 13.6 per cent and the population growth rate 0.6 per cent per annum, with infant mortality down to 7.8 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality negligible. More was spent on health and education than on any other sector; 193.8 million dollars had been allocated to health out of a total budget of 1.9 billion dollars. In effect, there was a free national health service backed up by a good network of private health providers.

24. It was impossible to know for certain whether abortion was used as a method of contraception. Every effort was made to offer comprehensive reproductive health counselling to anyone seeking it and termination of pregnancy was governed by very stringent regulations: at least one doctor's certificate was required and after the first three months, the operation had to be performed in a hospital. Furthermore, the Family Life Education Programme provided guidance in schools and on radio and television. Pregnant women and mothers were automatically referred to community follow-up care. The green card was a record of a child's birth and immunization and gave entitlement to free dental care.

25. He said that under a comprehensive, albeit unwritten, education and protection policy to deal with HIV infection and AIDS, all health practitioners and even teachers had to follow safety procedures at all times. HIV-positive children received the same education as other young people and their anonymity was protected in order to avoid discrimination. The Government had established the National Advisory Committee on AIDS, while the AIDS Society of Barbados, a non-governmental organization, received government support.

26. Children under 16 were allowed access to psychological services, and every secondary school had a guidance and counselling department staffed by trained officers who observed strict confidentiality and could independently refer cases to other agencies. In addition, a number of schools had established peer counselling groups. The Youth Advocacy Movement comprised groups of young persons trained to deal with adolescent development and reproductive health and rights issues. It was hoped that such groups could be set up in every school, as it was recognized that young people tended to listen to the advice of their peers. Song and dance were used to get the message across and youth groups went into depressed areas to try to work "on the block" with young people who would otherwise shun counselling.

27. There were no street children in Barbados. If a mother and her children were evicted from their home, the social services acted fast to find emergency housing. The Juvenile Liaison Scheme (a special unit of police officers trained as social workers) and the Child Care Board likewise intervened to provide assistance.

28. Turning to the question of why boys were more frequently abandoned than girls, he explained that one reason was that it was widely believed that adolescent boys were difficult and troublesome, and so prospective adoptive parents preferred girls. Some welcome changes in attitude had been achieved by an information drive and advocacy.

29. He pointed out that the Child Care Board's statistics on child abuse could record only reported cases and he believed that for every reported case, five might go unreported. In 1998 there had been 1,132 referrals. Since no specific study on the subject had yet been conducted, postgraduate sociology students were being encouraged to undertake that work.

30. Replying to the question about breastfeeding, he said that the Ministry of Health had been working on a breastfeeding promotion programme and a national survey providing up-to-date information was due to be published in the near future. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital had received the Baby-Friendly Hospital Award in January 1999. The breastfeeding initiative covered the first six months of a child's life and community nurses encouraged mothers to breastfeed for as long as possible. A number of private or government-run day-care centres had been established to assist nursing working mothers. Unfortunately, industrial companies had not yet set up crèches on their premises, but they were being urged to do so.

31. If children were orphaned by AIDS, the Child Care Board took immediate action and efforts focused on finding foster parents, preferably within the extended family, and on keeping the child at school.

32. Ms. CRAWFORD acknowledged that more effort needed to be done to improve the quality and collection of data on substance abuse and suicide. The National Monitoring Committee had made research in that area one of its priorities. In addition, the existance of a research and coordination section in the new Ministry of Social Transformation would make it easier to address causes of suicide. She did not have any statistics on the percentage of disabled children in the population, but the relevant data were being collected.

33. The purpose of visits carried out during adoption and foster care reviews was to monitor the welfare, health, conduct and schooling of the child. From the outset, therefore, the authorities had a good idea of whether children should be reunited with their families or required permanent placement. As families could foster with a view to adoption, the child was offered more stability in the course of the adoption process. In the event of short-term placement, the Child Care Board worked with the family and tried to secure reunification, but sometimes separation proved necessary.

34. The Evalina Smith Ward and St. Andrew's Centre catered for severely disabled children and young people. Disabled children could remain in school until they were 19. From the age of 16, they could attend the pre-vocational centre where they learned life skills. Children with disabilities could also go to normal schools and universities.

35. In reply to the question about problems encountered in early childhood programmes, she said that the number of staff monitoring that system had been increased from one to three. One was a pre-school educator, the other two were social workers. There was indeed a minimum set of standards for day-care facilities, which were inspected by the Ministry of Education, the Fire Department and the Child Care Board. Registration was on an annual basis and strict medical and licensing requirements had to be met, after which there was ongoing monitoring. In addition to private day-care centres, the Government had set up more nurseries attached to schools, for over 3-year-olds. A parent volunteer system had been introduced, whereby parents were trained to help with the general running of such facilities.

36. Referring to measures to protect children who had been sexually abused, she said that the principal aim was to reduce the child's trauma. A Child Care Board representative, sometimes accompanied by a police officer, interviewed the victim who would then be taken to a doctor. A safety order would be issued if necessary. It had been found that families were often willing to assist, thereby obviating the need for institutional care. However, if placement proved to be necessary, the child was assessed and counselled by a psychologist and a psychiatrist. A child abuse project had been launched in two schools to alert children to inappropriate behaviour, empower them to say "no" and advise them what to do in the event of indecent assault.

37. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that she wished to clarify her remarks of the previous day. Under the Family Law Act of 1976, children born from consensual unions that had lasted at least five years were entitled to the same considerations as those born from marital unions. The Status of Children

Reform Act had subsequently been passed to prohibit the stigmatization of children born out of wedlock. All matters affecting children born in or out of wedlock were handled in a manner that involved both parents; that included custody issues.

38. Turning to the matter of violence in the home, she said that when a case of child abuse was brought to the attention of the courts, the parents, and the mother in particular, were called in to provide information about the child. Efforts were sometimes made to settle such problems out of court, since mothers were often unwilling to give evidence. Some Barbados judges dismissed such cases; most, however, proceeded, considering the mother as a hostile witness. Dismissal undoubtedly resulted in loss of self-esteem for a child. In any event, the courts sought to further the child's best interests; for instance, consideration was given to whether or not the perpetrator of abuse was the sole breadwinner. Both the Child Care Board and the courts endeavoured to obtain the testimony of the child. Unfortunately, despite the fact that cases involving children were supposed to be handled expeditiously, the Barbados justice system worked slowly: an investigation had to be conducted and medical evidence presented.

39. The Board of Women's Affairs had established a comprehensive programme to deal with domestic abuse; it frequently conducted seminars, workshops and surveys, and sponsored radio and television broadcasts regarding violence in the home. Its efforts had resulted in the promulgation of the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) Act 1992. Under the act, a person wishing to enter a complaint of domestic abuse could approach the courts directly, without first visiting a police station. Within two days, the parties involved were summoned. There followed a period of six weeks during which the parties were expected to receive counselling. If either party refused to participate in counselling, he/she would be served a court order and become liable to imprisonment. In addition, both the Child Care Board and the Welfare Department could institute proceedings, at the request of the child or of any other individual. It was therefore no longer necessary to contact the police, who had formerly been an obstacle to justice in cases of domestic violence.

40. In many jurisdictions, forms of misconduct such as truancy or running away from home were considered statutory offences, and could result in court proceedings. There were no street children in Barbados. Runaways who did not return home voluntarily might face police charges, but only if there was a persistent pattern of misconduct. The social welfare agencies, for their part, always returned children to their homes.

41. Mrs. KARP asked whether counselling was available to children who did not attend school. She wondered whether a system of protection orders was sufficiently stringent to deal with the problem of domestic violence, which was, after all, a criminal offence. Were there provisions for the punishment of offenders?

42. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that the charge against the perpetrator of the violent act constituted part of the complaint.

43. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to raise additional questions regarding education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

44. Mrs. KARP asked whether any effort had been made to study the quality of education in the various parts of the school system, government or private, and in particular to prevent children from dropping out of school.

45. According to a survey conducted by the World Bank in 1995, 50 per cent of children in rural schools, and 30 per cent of children in urban schools, did not have basic textbooks. Furthermore, schools suffered from a shortage of libraries. In view of a child's right to education and information, what measures was the Government taking to remedy those deficiencies? She also wished to know what measures, if any, had been taken to combat drug use and violence in schools.

46. The report offered little information about compliance with articles 30 and 40 of the Convention. It would be useful to know whether the disciplinary use of flogging in prison was monitored, and whether a report of the circumstances was required. Children were currently detained in a separate ward of the adult prison. Had the Government envisaged alternative detention and rehabilitation measures?

47. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that the Barbados Government evidently accorded high priority to social services and welfare. From a macroeconomic standpoint, it would be helpful to know how the Government financed the budget. What was the taxation system, and was it effective? She would be interested to know how the globalization of the world economy had affected Barbados. Had the Government found ways of benefiting from that phenomenon, for instance by taxing foreign companies? What kinds of grants and funds were received from the international community and what policies had the Government instituted to alleviate poverty?

48. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO inquired how the system of monitoring school attendance was structured, how many monitors there were, and whether they worked by zone or by school. To what extent was education free? What expenses were paid by parents, and - in view of the fact that scholarships were disbursed only to secondary school students - what measures were taken to assist parents of primary schoolchildren who were unable to pay? Was the number of scholarships for secondary schoolchildren sufficient? Were other resources available?

49. The Sexual Offences Act, 1992-93, made sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 14 a criminal offence; but the minimum legal age of consent was 16. What happened when a child who fell between those two ages was sexually abused? Allowing a person who had sexual intercourse with a young person to claim unawareness of his or her age vitiated the law. Since most children now looked older than their age, were not all consequently in danger? What measures were envisaged to provide better protection from sexual abuse?

50. Mrs. KARP inquired how many children were imprisoned in Barbados, and what measures were taken to provide the minimum conditions necessary for their welfare.

51. Regrettably, the report made no mention of leisure, play or cultural activities.

52. Mr. RABAH asked how many young people were committed to the Government Industrial School rather than to prison, and how they were treated. He also wished to know how they were treated in police stations, and how long they could legally be detained. Did any NGOs assist the Goverment in the administration of juvenile justice?

53. More information would be welcome concerning measures taken to combat drug abuse.

54. Mrs. MOKHUANE welcomed the efforts to introduce a child-centered curriculum in the schools, to provide more books, to reduce the disparities between rural and urban schools, and to establish teacher training programmes. Had those reforms been evaluated? If so, what were the results?

55. Mr. DOEK inquired how many children in Barbados were in conflict with the law, whether the requirement that an adult detainee should be brought before a judge within 72 hours also applied to children, and whether children benefited from legal assistance after arrest. He also wished to know whether children committed to the Government Industrial School could file a request for release, and whether they had an independent right to do so.

56. Miss MASON (Barbados) said that children who had been sentenced by the juvenile justice system could be held in a juvenile detention facility until they reached the age of 18. As the Juvenile Court could impose sentences ranging from three to five years, that meant in practice that a 15-year-old would receive a three-year sentence. Young offenders who behaved so badly in that facility that they were regarded as uncontrollable, were sent back to the court. The juvenile judicial officer would then conduct an inquiry and the court could order their transfer to the adult prison. As only 10 out of 100 places in the female section of the prison were in use, young people detained there would be segregated from any adult prisoners. In fact, none of the young delinquents who had been sentenced by the Juvenile Court were being held in the adult prison, whereas some 16 to 18-year-olds who had appeared before an adult court were being detained there.

57. In response to questions from Mr. Doek and Mr. Rabah, she said that, when a child was arrested, the arresting officers' first duty was to contact the parents. They were also obliged to summon a probation officer, failing which the case would be automatically dismissed by the court. It was customary for a child to be handed over to his or her parents to be brought before the court the following day. No child was ever kept in prison or in police custody overnight. Children could be taken to the Child Care Board if necessary or to the Government Industrial School if they were violent. NGOs provided assistance through being represented on the visiting boards of the Juvenile Liaison Scheme, the Industrial Schools and the prisons.

58. With regard to the question asked by Mr. Rabah, she said that all the relevant information concerning action to combat drug abuse was contained in the written reply to question 36. In reply to Mr. Doek's question, she conceded that there was a serious problem with regard to the collection of

statistics. There was a Central Statistical Office, but the data it collected often differed from police data, which were based on different indicators and could in turn differ from Juvenile Court data. As Ms. Crawford had said, every attempt would be made to furnish the Committee with more streamlined information when Barbados presented its second periodic report.

59. All children were entitled to legal aid, although it was refused by some parents who preferred their children to be disciplined by the courts. Criticism had been justly levelled at the discrimination against children implicit in sentencing under the juvenile justice system. That discrimination lay in the fact that, for a similar offence, an adult could be sentenced to perhaps one year's imprisonment, whereas a child had to be sent to reform school for three to five years. Any reduction of the child's sentence required a protracted process of application to the relevant authorities to have the child licensed out to the parents over a certain period. However, over the years it had become common practice, instead of sentencing a child to three years in reform school, to impose a sentence of perhaps one year, depending on the offence, in order to circumvent the long process entailed in having the sentence reduced. Legally, a child of 15 could be sentenced to three years' detention and a child of 13 to a five-year term, so that they would be released at age 18. Ways of remedying that discriminatory situation were under active consideration.

60. Ms. CRAWFORD (Barbados) said that all Barbadian children were entitled to free education up to the tertiary level. They were tested for passage from primary to secondary education by the common entrance examination, usually at age 11, after which they could opt to attend a free government secondary school, or a private - usually religious - secondary school, in which case the children received a bursary to assist with school needs.

61. Since the initial report had been submitted, the education system had been reviewed, culminating in the publication of a White Paper for implementation of an educational reform which had begun in 1995 and was currently being evaluated. It had been decided that the problem concerned not so much access to education, but its quality. Accordingly, the system of automatic placement had been made more flexible to enable children to defer the common entrance examination for one year, or, conversely, to take advantage of the fast-track system and sit the examination earlier, depending on their abilities. Under the reform, primary schoolchildren were tested in English and mathematics at the ages of 7 and 9 so that any deficiencies could be remedied in time for the common entrance examination. The sight and hearing of all children in the 5 to 11 age group were tested to ensure that their academic performance was not inhibited.

62. Primary schools were free and assistance with the purchase of textbooks and uniforms could be obtained through the welfare system. There were three official attendance officers who monitored absenteeism in the entire school system. They could apprehend children in public places, contact the parents and, where necessary, follow up their investigations in the child's home and make the appropriate referrals. One outcome of the educational reform was the Eductech 2000 Programme designed to improve the quality of textbooks.

63. All secondary schools possessed libraries, as did many primary schools. Pupils at those that did not had access to mobile libraries or the permanent libraries that existed in each parish. Although scholarships were awarded only for secondary education in private schools, education was compulsory and parents could be punished for failure to send their children to school.

64. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados), replying to the question about the Government budget said that the total budget was $1.9 billion, of which $1.6 billion was projected revenue, with $1.5 billion coming from tax revenue and $73 million from non-tax revenue. He would forward to Committee members copies of the Government's Estimate of Expenditure for 1999-2000, in which financing arrangements were explained in detail.

65. On the subject of globalization, while there were benefits for the industrialized countries, especially those which had partnerships with large multinational corporations, developing countries with small open economies, such as those in the Caribbean, were extremely vulnerable. For instance, the World Trade Organization had permitted the United States to impose sanctions on European countries offering preferential arrangements to banana-producing Caribbean islands. The Caribbean was perturbed lest the same should occur with the sugar industry. At a recent meeting of the Caribbean Development Bank, the Prime Minister of Barbados had stressed the need to restructure Caribbean economies within five years which would naturally call for a great deal of political will and massive investments.

66. The Government's manifesto addressed in detail the subject of poverty eradication, for which there was a productive partnership between the Government and the private sector, including NGOs. The Ministry of Social Transformation had been established specifically to deal with poverty and had a budget of $63 million. The Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission played an important role in poverty eradication. The entire social service system would be placed under that single ministry which would comprise a sort of "one-stop shop" for all services. The NGO sector, including churches and community associations, would identify cases of need, because not all poor people were prepared to come forward. Assistance should be provided in such a way as not to undermine the dignity of the human person. Poverty alleviation was not simply a matter of money, but involved establishing the right conditions. Barbados would continue to improve its social services and endeavour to maintain the population growth rate at under 1 per cent.

67. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to voice their concluding observations on the initial report of Barbados.

68. Mr. DOEK complimented the delegation on its presentation of the report and the written and oral replies, all of which had been highly informative. There were many positive aspects to be noted, including the activities of the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child and the Child Care Board, the activities relating to the care and protection of children with disabilities, and more energetic action to deal with child abuse and neglect. The issues which in his view called for attention were data collection and discrimination in the area of education, especially against the country's non-permanent residents. There was also a need for more specific legislation

to give children a voice in their own affairs; it appeared to be left to the discretion of the interlocutor to judge the child's maturity. He recommended that the authorities adopt a clear policy on foster care. Lastly, he was extremely alarmed at the figures for teenage births and abortions.

69. Mrs. KARP, endorsing Mr. Doek's complimentary remarks, said that she hoped that the newly established National Monitoring Committee would work to implement the plans and projects mentioned by the delegation and that the Committee's comments would be publicized when the delegation returned home. She also hoped that the Committee's recommendation would help enhance the status of children in Barbados.

70. Mrs. MOKHUANE congratulated the delegation on its fruitful dialogue with the Committee and on the fact that its very positive programmes and policies addressed most of the articles of the Convention. She was, however, deeply disturbed at the deficiencies in data collection and recommended that the authorities endeavour to establish useful statistics on such problems as child abuse and suicide. She hoped that the new National Plan would be sustained. Sustainability was a major problem that needed to be addressed for the good of Barbadian children in particular.

71. On the subject of corporal punishment, there appeared to be a consensus within the Committee that the practice of flogging needed to be addressed urgently. It spread the idea of violence in the home and in society as a whole, and was not a practice on which children's behaviour should be modelled. The educational initiatives launched in 1994 were impressive, but it was necessary to undertake studies to evaluate their outcome and the challenges and difficulties encountered in implementing them.

72. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to respond to members' concluding observations.

73. Mr. GRIFFITH (Barbados) thanked the Committee for the opportunity it had offered his delegation to benefit from its vast knowledge and rich insight into matters pertaining to children in Barbados and, by extension, the world over. He would impress upon his authorities the need to consider ratifying the Convention against Torture.

74. A Caribbean-wide media competition, currently in progress, was focusing public attention on adolescent reproductive health and rights. Awards would be made to individual journalists and the media firms they worked for, the aim being to ensure forward movement on that issue throughout the Caribbean. He would inform his authorities of the Committee's dissatisfaction with data disaggregation procedures in Barbados, particularly with regard to budgetary spending on children's issues as opposed to administrative and other expenditure.

75. The shortage of social workers had arisen precisely because the training courses had been expanded. However, negotiations were being conducted with the University of the West Indies to accelerate training. Barbadian social workers who had been working in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States were returning home, and the country would certainly take advantage of their training and experience.

76. He had noted the need for advocacy on gender issues, especially with regard to the role and responsibilities of men. That was a sociological problem requiring urgent attention to ensure the socialization of boys as well as girls. Twenty-five years earlier, men had benefited from higher levels of education than women and had dominated the major professions. That situation had been totally reversed, with women now accounting for 73 per cent of university graduates.

77. Two adolescent development centres had been asked to deal with young people about to leave residential care at age 18 under a programme designed, with the assistance of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and other private firms, to ensure adequate preparation for their return to society. The Elijah House Project, with non-uniformed staff and individual rooms, provided an opportunity for the residents to help operate the project and develop their vocational and leadership skills. A telethon was being planned to raise funds for the project. Serious attention would be given to speeding up the overhaul of the Reformatory and Industrial Schools (Amendment) Act. He was aware of the need to standardize statistical material and accelerate its computerization to make it more efficient and readily available.

78. On the delegation's return to Barbados, it would be his responsibility to submit to the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child a report containing specific recommendations on the action advocated at the current session and the required pace of implementation. The dialogue with the Committee had been an excellent learning experience and had provided valuable insight into child care as a whole.

79. The CHAIRPERSON said that she had been enormously impressed by the quality of the Barbadian delegation whose report - the first she had had to deal with as Chairperson - had given rise to an interesting and good-natured discussion. She expected the Committee's report and recommendations to be publicized in Barbados in due course.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.